UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE

Northwest Region
7600 Sandpoint Way N.E.
Seattle, WA 98115

Northwest Fisheries Science Center
2725 Montlake Blvd. E.
Seattle, WA 98112

November 10, 1999

Dear Interested Parties:

We are pleased to announce that the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is ready to begin formal recovery planning for Pacific salmon and steelhead evolutionarily significant units (ESUs) listed as threatened or endangered species under the U.S. Endangered Species Act (ESA). We are asking for your help in this ambitious effort. At this time, we are soliciting nominations for Technical Recovery Teams (TRTs) to develop recovery goals for listed salmonids in two domains: 1) Puget Sound and Olympic Peninsula in Washington and 2) Willamette and Lower Columbia River Basins and Southwest Washington. Below is a description of the recovery planning process for West Coast salmonids in general, as well as information on the specific tasks this TRT will be asked to complete, and the criteria for nominees.

Recovery planning for West Coast salmonids will entail developing comprehensive recovery plans for all listed salmonid species within a series of discrete geographic areas, or domains. Recovery planning areas that have been tentatively identified are (1) Puget Sound/Olympic Peninsula; (2) Willamette River/Lower Columbia River/Southwest Washington; (3) Mid/Upper Columbia River; (4) Snake River; (5) Oregon Coast; (6) Southern Oregon/Northern California Coast (to be jointly administered by NMFS Northwest and Southwest Regions); (7) North-Central California Coast; (8) South-Central California Coast; and (9) California Central Valley.

The ESA and NMFS recovery planning guidance require recovery plans to contain (1) an assessment of the factors that caused the population to decline and that are impeding recovery; (2) objective, measurable criteria (recovery goals) for determining when recovery is achieved and the species can be de-listed; (3) a description of the site-specific actions needed to achieve the recovery goals; and (4) an estimate of the cost and time required to carry out those actions. In addition, the plans should set priorities for the actions and include a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation plan for gauging progress toward recovery.

The first two elements above are largely a technical exercise with policy input, while the last two elements are largely a policy exercise with technical input. The NMFS will address the first two elements by appointing a TRT for each recovery planning area. For the last two elements, NMFS intends to work with state, local, regional, tribal, other Federal, and private entities to craft a recovery planning process suited to each planning area.

At this time we would like your aid in identifying qualified candidates to serve on the TRTs for either of the two domains. The team for the Willamette River/Lower Columbia River/Southwest Washington Recovery Planning Area will develop recovery goals for Upper Willamette Steelhead, Upper Willamette Chinook, Lower Columbia Steelhead, Lower Columbia Chinook,

and Columbia River Chum. The team for the Puget Sound and Olympic Peninsula Recovery Planning Area will develop recovery goals for Puget Sound Chinook, Hood Canal Summer Chum, and Lake Ozette Sockeye. More specifically, both teams will be asked to

- Identify recovery criteria for populations and ESUs.
- Identify recovery criteria for habitat.
- Identify factors for decline and limiting factors.
- Identify early actions for recovery.
- Identify research, monitoring, and evaluation needs.
- Serve as science advisors for the recovery planning phase--i.e., advising the groups charged with developing recovery measures.

For a more complete description of these tasks, the draft TRT Work Program will be posted on the NWFSC website beginning Nov. 15 (http://research.nwfsc.noaa.gov/nwfsc-homepage.html). The TRT will consist of experts in salmon biology, population dynamics, conservation biology, ecology, and other disciplines relevant to the planning area. At least one member of each team will have experience working in the geographic area in question and extensive knowledge of the area and the anadromous salmonids that inhabit it. Also, each member must meet the first three criteria below (numbers 1-3) and at least one of the remaining three criteria (numbers 4-6).

1. High achievement in a relevant discipline, which may include ecology, genetics, fisheries, hydrology, river geomorphology, or other appropriate disciplines.
2. High standards of scientific integrity, independence, and objectivity.
3. A demonstrated interest in and ability to work effectively in an interdisciplinary team setting.
4. Extensive knowledge of West Coast salmon biology, status, or habitat.
5. A record of scientific accomplishment documented by contributions to peer-reviewed literature or other evidence of success in creative scientific endeavor.
6. A demonstrated ability to forge creative solutions to complex problems.

For both domains, an independent panel will evaluate all nominations to ensure that they meet the above criteria. The panel will provide a list of qualified candidates to the NMFS Northwest Regional Administrator who–in consultation with the Northwest Fisheries Science Center Director–will make final appointments to the team.

We expect that the TRTs will include at least one scientist from the NMFS Northwest Fisheries Science Center (who must meet the same selection criteria as other members) and five to eight other qualified members. The other members could come from state or other Federal agencies, tribal governments, academic institutions, industry, the environmental community, or other groups. A representative from the NMFS Northwest Regional Office will serve as the TRT's recovery plan coordinator to provide ESA policy guidance and ensure that the team receives the administrative support it needs.

We anticipate that members of the TRT will need to devote approximately 25 percent of their time to fulfill their responsibilities. We expect the process of finalizing recovery goals and related tasks for all ESUs within the domain to take up to two years.

We appreciate your interest and assistance in this important effort. Please forward your nominations to Beth Sanderson at the NMFS Northwest Fisheries Science Center (2725 Montlake Blvd. East, Seattle, WA 98112) by December 10, 1999. To facilitate the evaluation, please provide a brief Curriculum Vitae for each nominee, and a short explanation of how the nominee meets the selection criteria.

If you have any questions, please contact Beth Sanderson at the Northwest Fisheries Science Center (206-860-3410), Patty Dornbusch at the Northwest Regional Office (503-230-5430), or Elizabeth Babcock at the Northwest Regional Office (206-526-4505). Additional information on recovery planning for West Coast salmon is also available on the Internet at www.nwr.noaa.gov.

Sincerely,

Will Stelle
Administrator
Northwest Region

Usha Varanasi
Science Director
Northwest Fisheries Science Center

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